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Central Intelligence Agency
Office of the Deputy Director for Intelligence

26 March 1987

John R. ...

NOTE TO: Acting Director of Central Intelligence

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Attached is a follow-up paper that was requested at a recent NSPG meeting on Afghanistan. The paper discusses possibilities of the Kabul regime surviving the withdrawal of Soviet forces over six, twelve, or eighteen months. I think you will find it interesting.

I have also forwarded copies to the principal members of PRG (Powell, Armacost, Armitage, and Moellering), as well as Ikle, Don Gregg, Bob Oakley, Ed Djerejian (State/NEA), Fritz Ermarth, [redacted] and Dan Webster. NESAs plans to make further distribution tomorrow.

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[redacted]
Richard J. Kerr
Deputy Director for Intelligence

Attachment:

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Central Intelligence Agency



Washington, D. C. 20505

DIRECTORATE OF INTELLIGENCE

26 March 1987

Afghanistan: Regime Durability Under Various
Withdrawal Timetables--A Speculative Assessment [REDACTED]

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SUMMARY

We believe the current Kabul regime would not survive a withdrawal of Soviet forces, be it over a period of six, twelve, or eighteen months. A combination of intense factionalism in the ruling People's Democratic Party of Afghanistan (PDPA) and the Afghan military's inability to stand on its own without massive Soviet support, in our opinion, insures the demise of the Kabul regime before the completion of a Soviet withdrawal, even if the withdrawal was stretched out over 18 months. In our view, the regime is kept in power only by the presence of Soviet troops; it lacks popular support and has failed to establish a reliable bureaucratic machine. [REDACTED]

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The disintegration of the Afghan armed forces would begin soon after the announcement of a Soviet withdrawal. Despite marginal improvements in 1986, most Afghan forces suffer from poor morale and are undermanned, ill-trained, and poorly equipped. [REDACTED]

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The party and the military currently are in the midst of a debilitating bout of factionalism featuring splits within the Parcham faction between supporters of Najib and those of Babrak as well as an escalating dispute between the Parcham and the bigger Khalq faction. These disputes have undermined what little support the regime has managed to attract. In the Afghan armed forces, the largely Khalqi senior officer corps is showing an

This memorandum was prepared by [REDACTED]

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[REDACTED] Office of Near Eastern and South Asian Analysis. Comments and queries are welcome and should be directed to the Chief, South Asia Division, Office of Near Eastern and South Asian Analysis, [REDACTED]

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increasing propensity to balk at orders from the
Parchami-dominated political leadership. [REDACTED]

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Assumptions

Our assessment is rooted in three major assumptions:

--Moscow will comply with an accord and agree to a withdrawal schedule that is "front-loaded," resulting in an immediate withdrawal of up to one-third of its troops, with the remainder removed in stages over the duration of the withdrawal timetable. (We believe the Soviets are unlikely to leave behind a sizable "adviser corps"--say several thousand troops--to assist the Afghans; such a group would be unable to defend itself adequately against insurgent attacks. We also believe the Soviets are unlikely to leave behind significant air assets to support the Afghans; the security of such aircraft probably could not be guaranteed without the presence of large numbers of Soviet ground forces.) Troop withdrawal arrangements are to be part of a bilateral Soviet-Afghan agreement.

--The Soviet withdrawal--of whatever duration--will be based on an accord worked out under UN auspices at Geneva in which the Pakistanis agree to shut down support for the resistance within 30 days after an agreement was signed. (We do not believe that Islamabad--even with its best effort--is capable of completely sealing Pakistan's border with Afghanistan. Contraband arms are likely to continue to flow, albeit at a much-reduced rate, across the border, especially through the tribal areas of the North West Frontier Province.)

--No cease-fire would accompany the accord. All parties to the conflict recognize the need to establish an interim or national reconciliation government. We believe that such a government--if dominated by the PDPA--would fall apart at roughly the same rate and same manner as a PDPA-only regime. In our opinion, however, an interim or reconciliation government dominated by the insurgents, or by Afghan exiles acceptable to the insurgents, probably would survive each of the three scenarios discussed herein. [REDACTED]

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Regime Survivability Under Six-, Twelve-, and Eighteen-Month Timetables

Although we do not believe that the PDPA regime could survive the withdrawal of Soviet troops under any of the three timetables, there probably would be some differences in the manner in which the regime collapsed. The shorter the timetable the quicker and more complete would be the collapse of the government in Kabul. Such a collapse probably would

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be punctuated by armed clashes between the Parcham and Khalq factions, a rapid melting away of the Afghan armed forces, and a massive transfer of allegiances from the regime to the resistance by all levels of government and party cadres. Under an 18-month withdrawal the regime's collapse would be relatively slow--some Afghan units might continue to fight, the regime might continue to control Kabul, and some senior officials might remain at their posts on the chance the Soviets would renege on withdrawing--but its ultimate dissolution, in our judgment, would be no less certain. (There are some Afghan Army units that probably would remain effective over a much longer period--such as the 25th Infantry Division at Khowst--because they manned by individuals who the insurgents would reject as defectors for ethnic reasons or because they are commanded by long-time, hardcore supporters of the PDPA. The existence of such units probably would create some pockets of regime resistance that would last longer than others.)

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We believe the psychological impact of a Soviet withdrawal announcement would cause the Afghan armed forces to begin to lose their presently limited combat effectiveness soon after the announcement. Although the Afghan army's combat capability increased marginally last year, it is plagued by severe manpower shortages, factionalism in the senior ranks, low morale, and inadequate training and equipment. These shortcomings persist despite vigorous efforts to eliminate them by Moscow and Kabul.

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Because Afghan operations would rapidly lose most Soviet ground, air, and artillery support during 6- and 12-month withdrawal schedules, we believe that the Afghan army could not sustain attacks against the insurgents. We also think the Afghan army and paramilitary units would suffer mass desertions and heavy casualties under either of these scenarios.

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The more abundant Soviet support available under an 18-month scenario might prolong the staying power of the Afghan army, but not to the point of insuring the survival of the Kabul regime. The Soviets might also provide the Afghans with more sophisticated equipment during an 18-month withdrawal in an effort to slow the erosion of their combat capabilities; in our view, however, not enough time would be available to train the Afghans to use the new equipment effectively. Although the start of an 18-month departure might see an upsurge in Soviet-Afghan combat operations greater than that witnessed under 6- and 12-month timetables, we believe that such activity would quickly taper-off and that the Afghan forces would begin to melt away once it became apparent that the Soviets were leaving.

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We believe the insurgents have long been stockpiling arms and

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[REDACTED] Most important insurgent commanders have stockpiled arms caches which in our view will provide them with a 6-to-12 month reserve supply of weaponry and ammunition. We believe that captured Soviet and Afghan arms, black-market arms procured in Pakistan, and aid from supporters such as Iran would be available to supplement shortfalls in resistance stocks during either of these timeframes. We also believe Afghan army deserters would provide the insurgents with a considerable amount of weaponry and intelligence under any of the three scenarios. We assume, however, that the resistance could not support a high level of combat activity from its own reserve stocks during an 18-month withdrawal period. [REDACTED]

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We cannot definitively predict the level of combat the insurgents would try to maintain under the three scenarios. Because there is no single command-and-control organization for the insurgency, we believe that the level of resistance attacks under each scenario probably would vary markedly from commander to commander as well as from region to region. Our best estimate is that the level of insurgent-inspired combat would increase as the length of the Soviet withdrawal timetable increased. We also believe that unity among the seven alliance leaders would be strongest during the 12- and 18-month timetables when the Soviets would be able to bring the most military pressure to bear. [REDACTED]

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How Each Scenario Might Unfold

SIX MONTHS: In our view, the announcement at Geneva of a six-month Soviet withdrawal schedule would prompt the almost immediate collapse of the Kabul regime. Officials at all levels would begin looking for avenues of escape, military organization would disintegrate and morale would plummet, and the regime's assets in the countryside--such as the tribal militias--would move quickly to make peace with the insurgents. We believe that under this scenario the insurgents might well try to lay low militarily to avoid antagonizing the departing Soviets--who, under the logistical demands of a six-month schedule, probably would have little time to launch large-scale attacks on insurgent targets other than those that would threaten lines of withdrawal and/or communication--and to conserve supplies for the violent jockeying for political dominance that almost certainly will occur in the immediate post-Soviet period. [REDACTED]

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We believe that the unity of the seven-party resistance alliance might weaken under a six-month scenario as each party leader sought to solidify his support for the post-war power struggle. In our opinion, Pakistan almost certainly would make a good-faith effort to halt the flow of support for the insurgents through Pakistan under a six-month timetable, believing the Kabul regime would not survive the withdrawal and, more important, that there was no point in taking the risk of giving the Soviets plausible grounds for reneging. Iranian support for the guerrillas--currently a small fraction of total aid--probably would not be reduced. [REDACTED]

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TWELVE MONTHS: We do not believe that an additional six months would increase the survivability of Najib's PDPA government. A front-loaded Soviet withdrawal timetable--even of a year's duration--would still mean the near-term loss of protection for the Afghan communists and, as a result, we would expect a widespread scurrying for cover under this scenario. We would also expect to see, however, more insurgent combat activity, particularly in the form of attacks against Afghan military targets and an increased campaign of urban violence. Because the resistance leaders have always feared that the Soviets would use a non-logistically based withdrawal timetable to try to destroy insurgent capabilities, they almost certainly would keep combat activities at a high level so as not to give the Soviet-Afghan forces a respite in which they could plan and deliver a devastating blow. The perception of such a Soviet threat probably would prompt alliance leaders to close ranks and project a united image, much in the way they reacted when caught off-guard by the Soviet-Afghan peace initiatives in early 1987. Likewise, we believe the Pakistanis also harbor fears about an extended Soviet withdrawal and that they would therefore be somewhat less diligent in stopping the flow of arms across the Afghanistan-Pakistan border during a 12-month withdrawal. [REDACTED]

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EIGHTEEN MONTHS: Because the Soviets would be much less hurried under an 18-month scenario and could carry out a few concentrated offensive ground and air operations against the insurgents while withdrawing, panic among the PDPA cadre probably would be less common under this scenario. The better Afghan military units might continue to perform effectively, some tribal militias might remain intact and loyal, and party splintering might slow as factional leaders tried to judge the prospects for regime--and personal--survival. In addition, senior PDPA cadre almost certainly would believe that an 18-month schedule provides the best chance of producing an environment in which intense resistance attacks could prompt a Soviet decision to abandon--or at least suspend--a Geneva accord. Nonetheless, we believe that the collapse played out over an 18-month withdrawal would be merely a slower version of that occurring under the 6- and 12-month scenarios. [REDACTED]

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We also believe, however, that an 18-month withdrawal would be the most difficult with which to cope for the resistance. In our judgment, none of the insurgent commanders--with the possible exception of Masood, who claims to rely heavily on captured weaponry--have stockpiled sufficient arms to support a high level of combat for an 18-month period. At the same time, the insurgents' fear of an extended-withdrawal schedule almost certainly would make them eager to maintain an intense level of attacks against both Afghan and Soviet targets. Under this scenario, the insurgents almost certainly would press their backers--both privately and publicly--for additional supplies. We believe that the Pakistanis probably would be the least diligent in limiting the flow of supplies across the border to the resistance under an 18-month withdrawal. [REDACTED]

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Appendix**Insurgent Ability to Sustain Combat After A
Cut-off of Aid Via Pakistan**

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We believe the Afghan insurgents could sustain fighting against Soviet and Afghan forces at or near current levels in much of the country for six to twelve months if support via Pakistan were withdrawn. The resistance is caching arms and has moved some training facilities inside Afghanistan at least partly in anticipation of a possible cutoff of aid from Islamabad. Panjsher Valley commander Masood and other insurgent groups in northern Afghanistan would probably be the best equipped to carry on the fighting. Although support from Arab countries, Iran and China would probably continue at low levels, we estimate the insurgents would exhaust their supplies of ammunition for heavy machine guns, rockets and mortars after six to twelve months. Thereafter, they would be able to carry on only low-level guerrilla war.

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In the event of a cutoff of aid through Pakistan following a negotiation settlement, insurgents would probably still receive significant financial aid from sympathetic Arab countries plus support from Iran and China. Arab and Iranian financial aid has been funneled to insurgent groups--primarily fundamentalists--that agree with the donors' religious and political beliefs, and we believe these groups would continue to receive most of the aid.

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Financial aid to the insurgent groups from Arab countries now comes through a variety of sources, including both private and government donations. Major private donors include the Wahhabis, based in Saudi Arabia and Muslim Brotherhood groups in Syria, Jordan, Egypt, and Kuwait. We believe that donations from private Arab sources are at least \$100 million per year.

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We believe that this Arab aid combined with cash available to the resistance from its own sources would be sufficient to enable them to purchase substantial amounts of small arms and ammunition even if other outside support were cut off. In addition, some Arab donors provide the insurgents military equipment, and we believe this would continue even if Pakistan attempted to halt such deliveries.

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other evidence suggests that resistance groups are receiving at least some military equipment directly from private Arab sources.

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**WITHDRAWAL
SCENARIOS**

**REGIME
REACTION**

**INSURGENT
REACTION**

**INSURGENT
SUPPLIES**

**COMBAT
LEVELS**

**AVAILABILITY OF
EXTERNAL SUPPORT**

**SIX
MONTHS**

*Immediate
collapse; cadre
desertions
increase; rapid
melting away of
armed forces.*

*Lowering of overall
military activity;
some attacks on
Afghan targets;
conserve supplies
for postwar power
struggle; decline
in alliance unity.*

*Adequate for
fighting at
current levels.*

*Much reduced;
insurgents
focus on Afghan
targets; Soviets
concentrate on
threats to
withdrawal routes.*

*Substantial
reduction of
supplies to
insurgents to
avoid giving
Soviets a
plausible basis
for reneging*

**TWELVE
MONTHS**

*No difference
from six-month
scenario.*

*Increased fear
of Soviets trying
to deal a
"knock-out" blow
before departing;
more attacks on
Afghan targets,
urban areas.*

*Barely adequate
to maintain
current levels;
some fall-off
in activity.*

*Significant
levels of
combat;
insurgents
step up
attacks across
the board*

*Slight increase
in supplies over
6-month scenario
level, but wary
of giving the
Soviets a basis
for halting the
withdrawal.*

**EIGHTEEN
MONTHS**

*Some control in
urban areas and
traditional regime
strongholds;
minimal military
effectiveness; slower
version of 6- and
12-month scenarios.*

*Closing of ranks
within alliance;
public and private
demands for greatly
increased external
support; sharply
increased attacks
on all targets.*

*Adequate
only for
small-scale
guerrilla
attacks*

*High levels of
combat on all
sides; Soviets
seek to inflict
maximum damage
on insurgents
before leaving.*

*Supplies still
well below
pre-Geneva
agreement levels,
but Pakistanis
likely to
discreetly assist
insurgent resupply.*

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